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ROMANS SURPASSES MOTT AS ALL-TIME LEADING TRAINER AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, Nov. 12, 2017) – The wait is finally over for trainer **Dale Romans**. He has achieved his longtime dream.

The South Louisville native took sole possession of the record for most wins by a trainer in the 143-year-old history of Churchill Downs from Hall of Fame horseman **Bill Mott** when 2-year-old **Storm Runner** (\$6.80) cruised to a 4 ½-length victory under jockey **Alex Canchari** in Sunday's sixth race.

For Romans, 51, it was his 703rd trip to the Churchill Downs winner's circle, which snapped a 702-702 tie between he and Mott.

Following the race, Romans was feted in the Churchill Downs winner's circle with a large trophy that was crafted from the wood of a century-old paddock that was used at Churchill Downs in the early part of the 20th century; a gift basket; and video tribute.

"It is truly an honor to stand here as the all-time leading trainer at Churchill Downs," Romans said. "With everything I've done in my career at Churchill Downs, and around the country, nothing beats this moment right now.

"It's a big team effort. Between (life partner) **Tammy (Fox)** and (assistant trainer) **Baldemar (Bahena)**, they've been with me for so many years. We couldn't be here without their help and everyone at the barn. I'm so proud of everyone involved."

Mott, 64, held the record since June 8, 1986 – more than 31 years – when he surpassed **Henry Forrest's** 271-win total with a victory by **Boldly Dared**. Of course New York-based Mott could tie or regain the record as he continues to have a productive string of horses at Churchill Downs under the care of assistant **Kenny McCarthy**, but Romans' has started three times as many horses and has won three times as many races as Mott in recent years.

"I've grown up on the backside of Churchill Downs," Romans said. "It was my playground when I was a kid and I used to always watch Bill Mott win multiple races per day. Over the years we became friends. He's called me multiple times and wished me luck. That just shows how classy of a guy he is. I've always told him I want to stand in the Winner's Circle at Churchill Downs, even if it was for just one day, and say 'no one has visited this spot more than me.' Today, I can officially say that."

Reached by telephone on Sunday afternoon, Mott applauded Romans for achieving the milestone.

"That's long enough. That's long enough for anybody to hold a record," said Mott, who won his first Churchill Downs race with **Miss Mill Creek** on May 17, 1977. "I knew it was coming and I've talked to him about it. I called him the other day to see what the score was and he said, 'Well, we're tied up.' And neither one of us could win a race – it seems like it took forever. I'm glad for Dale. It's something he's really wanted – I think he's wanted this as much as anything he's wanted in horse racing, really.

Born and raised in Louisville and a graduate of Butler High School, Romans grew up on the Churchill Downs backstretch learning his trade from his father, veteran trainer **Jerry Romans**, who passed away in 2000 – two years after saddling his 211th and final winner at Churchill Downs.

"I always knew what I was going to do," Romans said. "I didn't know if I'd be any successful at doing it or not. The first time as a groom I walked a horse over to the paddock from the barn I'm in today (Barn 4) I was 12 years old."

Romans took out his trainer's license in 1986 at age 18 and saddled his first winner at Turfway Park on Feb. 15, 1987, with **Miss Mindy** that he bought for \$1,500. He's recorded more than 1,900 since, including major stakes triumphs with top-level horses such as millionaire Grade I winners **Roses in May**, **Little Mike**, **Shackleford**, **Kitten's Joy**, **Silver Max**, **Keen Ice**, **Dullahan**, **Paddy O'Prado**, **Tapitsfly**, **Swift Temper**, **Brody's Cause**, **Thorn Song** and **Court Vision**.

"It took forever (to get that first win)," said Romans, who won an Eclipse Award as North America's Outstanding Trainer in 2012. "I think I ran 40-something horses before I won my first race. I didn't know if I ever was going to win a race back then. But Miss Mindy came along and that was a big thing. Everybody asks me, 'What's your biggest victory?' They want me to say Dubai World Cup or Preakness, but it might have been Miss Mindy! She got it all going. My proudest moment, besides the day my children were born, was the day my name showed up on the program as a trainer, and then to have won a race and get to the winner's circle."

Romans' first victory at Churchill Downs was **Final Destroyer**, who won a \$5,000 claiming race with a purse of \$6,650 on Nov. 12, 1987.

Romans, a 14-time leading trainer at Churchill Downs, experienced a breakout year in 2004 when two pivotal and life-changing horses joined his barn.

"That's when I first started working for (Churchill Downs' all-time leading owner) **Ken Ramsey**," Romans said. "He told me to go to Ocala (Florida) and go over all of his babies to see who I liked. He was going to divide them up between myself, Mott and (**D. Wayne**) **Lukas** at the time; he had bought about 60 yearlings. I went up to Ocala and looked at them and there were two that I just absolutely loved. One of them was a 3-year-old that had been injured and sent to the farm and the other was a big El Prado chestnut colt. Those two horses were **Roses in May** and **Kitten's Joy**."

Kitten's Joy (14-9-4-0—\$2,075,791) was crowned the 2004 Eclipse Award champion turf male after finishing second to **Better Talk Now** in that year's controversial Breeders' Cup Turf (GI) at Lone Star Park. **Roses in May** (13-8-4-0—\$5,490,187), who finished second to **Ghostzapper** in the 2004 Breeders' Cup Classic (GI), also at Lone Star, concluded his career with a three-length victory in the \$6 million Dubai World Cup (GI) the following year.

"That trip to Ocala that day from Miami (to pick out those horses) was the single biggest day of my career," Romans said. "I had always been a claiming trainer, and my father was a claiming trainer, and we never expected to be anything else. Ken Ramsey was the one that convinced me – with those two horses – that I could compete at the highest level. Those horses changed everything in my career."

His career accomplishments include a trio of Breeders' Cup wins – the 2009 Juvenile Fillies Turf with **Tapitsfly**, 2011 Mile with **Court Vision** and 2012 Turf with **Little Mike** – and a victory in the 2011 Preakness Stakes with **Shackleford**.

Shackleford (20-6-5-1—\$3,090,101) concluded his career with a one-length win in the 2012 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) – one of 45 stakes wins at Churchill Downs, which ranks fourth all-time.

"One of the biggest moments at Churchill Downs is when **Shackleford** won the (2012) Clark Handicap," Romans said. "I got a huge thrill when he ran in the Derby turning for home in front but to win this race in the last start of his career was very special."

Overall, Romans has won 1,937 races and his horses have amassed more than \$100.7 million in 12,488 career starts.

"Everybody knows there's one goal left out there – one major goal – and that one takes a lot of luck to get to it. That would be to win a Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs," Romans said. "Every 2-year-old in the barn is a Derby horse until they prove they're not."

Romans has relied on a veteran team to achieve the coveted milestone at Churchill Downs, from life partner and exercise rider Fox to longtime lead assistant Bahena to farm general manager and vice president of Romans Racing & Sales **Teresa Little** to bookkeeper **Laura Hernan**. But, despite the importance of his entire team, none has been more important than **Frank Jones Jr.**, one of the winningest owners in Churchill Downs history.

“Frank Jones is the single most important person in my life to this day outside of my father, who died at (age) 57,” Romans said. “I was young when I took over the barn and Frank was there. Frank was there the day I was born. Dad and Frank were friends before of the two of them had two nickels to rub together. He’s had two trainers in all of the years he’s had racehorses and that was my father and me.

“Without him, I don’t know where I would be in life let alone horseracing. He’s always been there. He’s a steady, smart, good person that’s always been there for me, and I don’t know what I would have done without him. I don’t know how anybody gets by without a Frank Jones in their life.

“He’s also one of the most important people to Kentucky racing that nobody really knows or talks about. Between 30 years on the (Kentucky) HBPA board negotiating all the contracts and working with people like (former Churchill Downs Incorporated president and CEO) **Tom Meeker** or (Churchill Downs Incorporated Chief Executive Officer) **Bill Carstanjen** that see him as an equal to make racing better, to all of his years on the (Kentucky) Horse Racing Commission board, he’s always been up-to-date on things in the game and absolutely has been one of the biggest players to make Kentucky racing what it’s become.”

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